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VENUS INVISIBLE AND OTHER POEMS

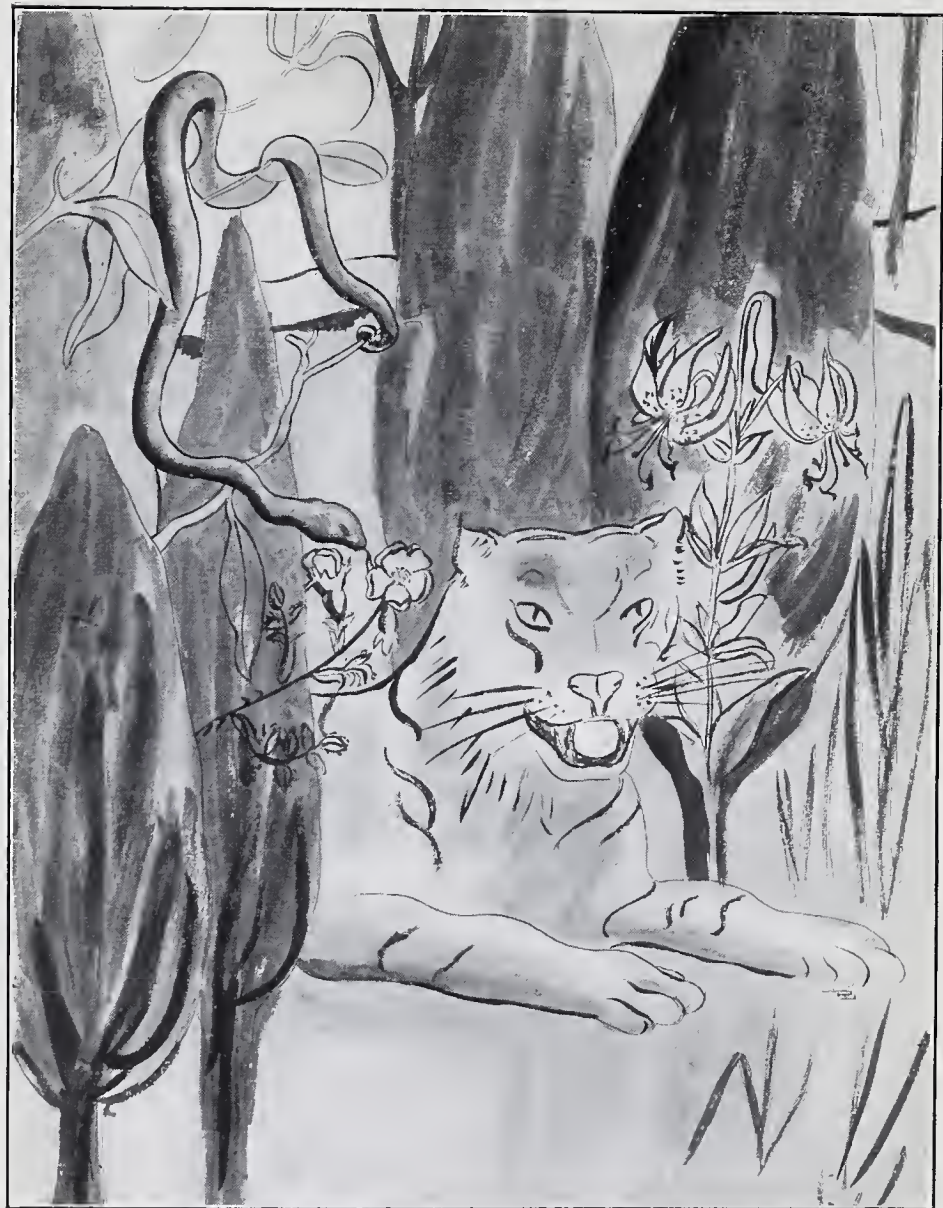
Other books by Nathalia Crane

THE JANITOR'S BOY AND OTHER POEMS

LAVA LANE

THE SUNKEN GARDEN (*a novel*)

THE SINGING CROW



"Said the tiger to the lily,
Said the viper to the rose. . . ."

VENUS INVISIBLE AND OTHER POEMS


By
NATHALIA CRANE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
RUTH JONAS



PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK *by*
COWARD-McCANN, Inc.
IN THE YEAR 1928

Acknowledgment is made to the New York *Herald-Tribune*, the New York *World* and the Doubleday, Doran Company for privilege to re-print some of the poems in this collection.



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This project is made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum & Library Services as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries

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VENUS INVISIBLE AND OTHER POEMS

THE PROPOSALS

S AID the tiger to the lily,
Said the viper to the rose:
Let us marry so our children
May attain the double pose.

With a feline half a flower—
With the attar in the asp,
We could institute a slaughter
That would make a planet gasp.

But the lily told the tiger
'Twas an empty enterprise
To raise the little half-breeds
With lanterns in their eyes.

And the rosebud gave her answer
The while she merely smiled:
A babe two-fourths a viper
Would drive a mother wild.

The world is growing gentle,
But few know what she owes
To the understanding lily
And the judgment of the rose.

THE NIGHTINGALE

A NIGHTINGALE,
Heir-suitor of the Moon
Took station high
Above a dour lagoon.

Below, the pool
Arraigned an altitude
Where stars became
The fictions of the lewd.

As one who wears
The ribbon of true woe
And yet remains
The tenant of a glow;

That nightingale
The reacher's posture donned.
Unlatched a spell—
The ovals of the wand.

Song

O H, cloudy ords
Of vaporous velveteen;
Oh, veruled mists
Loomed in night's Engadine.

Let go the loop
Of camis and gagoon,
That in the sheer
I may behold the Moon.

The rose dissolved
Is nearer than a star;
The latless dust
Of lilies not so far.

Joy only sees
The altar of a need,
And stakes the wing
Against a channeled reed.

Reality
A million births away,
And contact but
By theory in a lay.

Oh, Love declare
If love cannot attain,
Remoteness send
A litter for one strain;

Since flight may fail
The doctrines of the eye,
And one be seized
By stupors in the sky.



VENUS INVISIBLE

WE are of royal lineage
Descended, by your leave,
From that first curious laundress
Who scrubbed the clothes of Eve.

When we but tip a flagon
The tiles begin to shine,
And marble walls uncurtain
The Roman Twenty-nine.

If we a shawl half slanted
Or slipped a shoulder truss,
Great caliphs would be sending
Their mutes to talk with us.

We would get notes in carmine:
"For you zenanas yearn—
"The eunuch's in the foyer,
"The galley torches burn."

But we are sworn as artists
To postures dutiful,
And Venus bending forward
Becomes invisible.

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THE BON HOMME RICHARD

WE have raised the hulks of Perry
And laureled the Shannon's dead;
Have we no silver winches
For a hoist off Flamborough Head?

With a Captain used to hearing:
"Sir," and "the ship is clear,"
It is time we gave the Richard
The price of a salvage gear.

It is time we sent a runner
The route of the bos'n's lead—
John Paul Jones at Annapolis
And his ship off Flamborough Head.

With her battle lanterns swaying
To the roll of an old renown,
She is waiting the leaden sandal
That carries the diver down.

In the rotting arm-rack lingers
The flash of the cutlass blades,
And back of the broadside gun-ports
The souls of our carronades.

Oh, there are the deep sea stallions
That sentry the Dogger's floor.
Have we no djinns in armor
To open an ocean door?

FREUD

EVERY Monday shudder,
Every Tuesday scare,
Memories of tigers
Turning round to stare.

Art hops from the babe's bath
Shameless even yet;
Likely in the Charleston
Lurks the Minuet.

UNCLE DANIEL

UNCLE Daniel was an angel at the age of
ninety-four,
We kept him in a front room with a sentry at the
door.

We doubled every outpost when our rector made a
call—
An angel might come trotting forth with nothing
on at all.

He used to tell the housemaids of his early love
affairs
Till gigglers swept the corridors and titterers the
stairs.

He read the latest novels, Lorna Doone and Robin
Hood,
And smiled as only seraph smiles when story-books
are good.

Oh, I shall never quite forget a banquet auntie had;
We thought to please an angel and the angel seemed
so glad.

Our guests a college sisterhood; we spread a royal
lunch,
And unbeknown, I poured cologne into the Pliny
Punch.

Forgotten blooms from bureaus in the cloister of
a saint,
The contents of old crystals with the titles growing
faint.

The odors of *Narcissus* and a touch of *Phaon's*
Spell,
A half a pint of *Musk Rose* and two flasks of
Island Belle.

The power in the perfumes seemed almost the same
as wine
When we rose to drink to learning and a class called
"Ninety-nine."

All were gossiping of ethics and that Nine and
Ninety class,
When Uncle broke his silence as he sipped the
seventh glass.

He started very gently as the Grecian trireme
veers,
And drops the ring at Corinth, heading for the
Spartan piers.

He told of dusks and Dacian moons, of Phædrus
and the fawn,
Of rubies in a mortar crushed, of roses wet at dawn.

He drew a wondrous picture of King Arthur and
the mere,
And then he introduced a wall and played the
musketeer.

There came the inside version—Cleopatra and the
 pearl;
He said he knew that Crusoe knew that Friday was
 a girl.

He was starting on a story of adventures in Port
 Said
When Aunt Teresa rose and led the angel off to bed.

Oh, I have often pondered—had it happe'd to
 Lorna Doone,
Would she have gone confessing on the second
 afternoon?

Would she have carried oranges and marmalade
 and tea,
And made an angel happy as an angel ought to be?

FOSTER DIES IN BELLEVUE

OPEN the gate of Bellevue,
Way for a charioteer—
Now comes the Suwannee River,
Foster of Pittsburgh's here.

Wardmasters waiting the draw-out;
(He wrote "The Old Folks at Home").
Bellevue can handle an easel
Equal to Athens or Rome.

Give him the cot in the corner,
Rig up the sheet for a screen;
Nurses are jealous of singers
Dying in "Old Nineteen."

Bellevue salutes with a post card,
Writing addresses with care;
Likely she thinks all are poets
Since Suwannee River was there.

THE DUST

CRUMPLING a pyramid, humbling a rose,
The dust has its reasons wherever it goes.

Treating the sword blade the same as the staff,
Turning the chariot wheel into chaff.

Toppling a pillar and nudging a wall,
Building a sand pile to counter each fall.

Yielding to nothing—not even the rose,
The dust has its reasons wherever it goes.

OUR LOVERS

O H, we have had great lovers that we followed
to the pyre;
Our boasts out-do the Sabine girls—the Mosque of
St. Sophia.

And we are very sure of ours, for when a city falls,
They seize us and they love us and they hurl us
from the walls.

The Arab and Mongolian, the Aryan and the Russ,
Their names are on our tablets 'though they don't
remember us.

And if we are forgiving and in measure can con-
done,
We wonder at a blindness somewhat different from
our own.

For we have fatal memories and keep a careful
score,
While they seem so surprised because we never met
before.

THE ROYAL PRINTER

THE gods for every mortal
Designed a talisman,
And for the Royal Printer,
They made the coffee can.

Before the hieroglyphic
Became an old recluse
They stencilled silver skillets
With dents and berry juice.

And often in odd eras
There comes a copy Dan
To hand the Royal Printer
His dented coffee can.

PARROT IN BIRD STORE

DOLORITA

I AM Dolorita Quita
From the north of Ecuador;
They have chained me to a cross-bar
In a Flatbush Avenue store.

With a hundred Hartz canaries
And an Orinoco bird,
They are holding me for ransom
Till my country gets the word.

In the window there are puppies
That have promised o'er and o'er
To watch the crowds for sailors
Who may be from Ecuador.



THE RELIC HUNTERS

GONE is the fancy from Heaven,
Likewise the pagan glow,
But the British dip a dozen
From the bottom of Scapa Flow.

And they spoon up spicy bundles
From a mooring in a hall,
With the goddesses of Egypt—
Their faces 'gainst the wall.

The Norseman digs a galley
From a saga long grown dumb;
The Roman lifts the lava
From Herculaneum.

Oh, for a skinny windlass
To fatten upon a line,
Heaving our own lost idylls
Clear of a shaken brine.

For we are sold to engines
And hoops too fine to drone,
To motors in a pintle,
And voices in a cone.

Strange that we still have ardors—
The dhows off Haverstraw,
And children towing frigates
Beyond the sidler's claw.

THE TREASURE HOUSE

BACK of the old concealments
Cairns full of purple domes;
Minarets lying sideways,
Mosques in lost catacombs.

NEW MARKET

SIXTY-NINE cadets from Alacaster—

Neither Beauregard nor Jackson there to see.
Not a lyre in all the South has sung the story
Of the glory of our rebel infantry.

All our valley gentlemen were front of Richmond,
Not a man was left in any true abode;
Ina Lou ran in and screamed to old Aunt Nancy:
"Thar's a million Yankees on New Market
Road."

Then we saw another dust beyond the village.
"Can you tell what's moving therewards, Ina
Lou?"

"'Tis the military school from Alacaster
"Ordered out to block the way of Mistuh Blue."

They were little lads from Staunton and Front
Royal,
They were boys Virginia mothers put to bed;
Down the Shenandoah Valley rides a damsel
After Lee upon a bitless thorough-bred.

Sixty-nine cadets from Alacaster—

They have halted in the square but just to load;
Now they're coming up in double rank formation,
Coming up to hold the old New Market Road.

Far as Honeyville, was heard the opening volley,
And our regiment from Antioch got through;
To the right and left they passed the rebel infants
Spread across the way in front of Mistuh Blue.

There were Yankees who forgot to draw the ram-
rod,
And the grandsons give their version thisaway:
“We looked down a lane and saw Lee’s best divisions
“With a trumpet-boy in front of each array.”

Some were shot while meekly staring through a
sight-leaf,
Some were shot while gently firing from the
knee;
Not a lyre in all the South has sung the story
Of the glory of our rebel infantry.

MID-SUMMER MUTINY

O H, fallen is the sea forsooth
Since Sharkey moved from aft,
And Paul Jones taught a colony
To fortify a raft.

We hear below the barnacles
That jape a dangling reel;
We let a shibboleth decide
The way to point a keel.

Our booms know not what canvas is
The bowsprit fears to drown,
A mention of a royal makes
The pumps go up and down.

Our grandees doze with easy throats
But in a forward bunk
We celebrate with cutlasses
The chance of being sunk.

GREATNESS

I SING a song of greatness—
The grandeur in a grain;
Of seas that rim the minim,
Of dust that breeds a plain.

Of hope in beetles' bosoms,
Of love of butterflies;
The valor of the thistle
That seeks to down the skies.

I sing a song of greatness—
The mount that holds a horde;
The lord of all the honey,
The dot that draws the sword.

The ardor that deposits
In miniature a churl,
Slips on a coat of nacre
And then parades the pearl.

I sing a song of greatness,
Of loomsters spinning strings,
The ember in the glowworm,
The candle borne by wings.

The banquets served on beeswax,
The locust's home-brewed ale,
And greatness quaffing gallons
In mansions of the snail.

THE CONEY ISLAND ROAD

A CASIA laid the Canaan routes and camel-
thorn the Lode,
The odor of the spray begot the Coney Island Road.

A world's grand corridors depart; few tread a
Simplon Pass;
The rambles of Palmyra gave their charters to the
grass.

Old parallels for chariots and rally-lanes for kine,
Went down rebuffing terminals—the stations of
the brine.

They never seemed to realize that the Orders of the
Sand
Precede a cordoned Appian Way, the stroll Chi-
Hoang-Ti planned.

And so they dwindled mightily, communing with
the ferns,
Till conquerors grew weary tracing avenues to urns.

Such crumbling of old boulevards aroused a vaulted
wrath,
The skies condensed by anger hurled a sea across
a path.

Great billows came anointing, arid barrens overflowed—

The tide with drawn Toledo marched the Coney Island Road.

There's joy from Jehu's statute to a firstling's ikoned want,

When some divine reversion condescends to bless a jaunt.

Lost caravans return to chart, the oxen swing to wain,

And furrows gone beyond the scar, report themselves again.

They see it as intentioned that no inlay rules the loam—

That highways all celestial need an altar made of foam;

An altar amply hollowed for the thunder of an ode,

The ocean turning tumblers on the Coney Island Road.

THE WINGS OF LEAD *

THE gods released a vision on a world forespent
and dull;
They sent it as a challenge by the sea hawk and
the gull.

It roused the Norman eagerness, the Albion cliffs
turned red:

"You fly the wings of logic—can you fly the wings
of lead?

"It's been done in faded ages changing titles for
each writ—

"The wheel, the keel, the pinioned heel, the long-
bow and the bit;

"The tiller and the javelin, the harp with leaden
string,

"The pewter lens that Homer used, the ore in
David's sling.

"Locations in all latitudes where heroes left the
ground

"Still show the clots of cinnabar that marked the
last rebound.

* Awarded the First Prize of \$500 in the Spirit of St. Louis Contest
for the best poem on Lindbergh's flight.

"We set no rules on engines or the drive of whirling gear—

"Our course is but a thousand leagues of doubtful atmosphere.

"Designers may parade a moth or rack the condor's spread,

"One simple stipulation—that the pinions be of lead.

"The prize is for our own good will, and that no Freudian stand

"To tell the gods that courage spawns within an empty hand."

* * * *

The hawks were dropping challenges from Tokyo to Rome;

The gulls delivered cartels from Cape Town to tousled Nome.

The Nagasaki coal girls stopped to wipe their smutty eyes;

The damsels of Ferghana saw new rug tints in the skies.

A thousand ardent oilers swung the long spout twixt their nods

And tried to glimpse a meaning in the challenge of the gods.

And then one night there landed on a Mineola swale
A plane that looked like pewter, with a carrier of
mail.

Its wings were tinged like tea-box skins, each truss
of shadow gray,
Its cabin but an alcove slung beneath a metal ray.

"The Spirit of St. Louis" was inscribed upon the
lee;
It came from out a province that had never seen
the sea.

The pilot entered for the course, the quarter quad-
rant glide—
To fly the full Atlantic and the tag ends of the
tide.

He listed in as "Lindbergh"—just one pace beyond
the ranks;
He had a moon stained paddle and some star gas in
his tanks.

A chemist from Olympus with a ladle, nicked the
rays;
He said the ore was purer than it was in Cæsar's
days.

Invisible, he passed the word, the barograph was
sealed—

A plane with leaden wings went down the Mineola
Field.

It rose and fell and rose again, and then attained
to breath—

The raiment of the bubble when the bubble goes to
death.

And somewhere near to noontime as the fishers
turned to scan,

They saw a pearl gray monoplane slide east of
Grand Manan.

A single motored miracle, a lead mine on each
flank;

Below a shadow swept and awed the hundred
fathom bank.

Upon a billow rocked and cheered a lanterned
spindle buoy,

The off-shore bells were chanting for the Spirit of
St. Louis;

For o'er the darkened deep there flew, a carrier of
mail,

His engine drunk with star gas and a berserk in the
flail.

He made the course the gods had set, the quarter
quadrant glide,
He flew the full Atlantic and the tag ends of the
tide.

* * * *

The ruby runs a temperature—there's temper in
the gold,
A hero donned the wings of lead and rimmed
wrinkled wold.

'Tis a feat that sends old Richard groping down a
ghostly van,
Starts a Joan doing high steps on an ancient bar-
bican.

And the eyes of all look upward seeing signwork
drawing nigh,
The stony wings of Egypt coming back across the
sky.

Ephesian Dian teaching how a legend comes to
bloom,
And Indra holding something new, the plummet
laden plume.

We hear the clinking tambourine of Miriam anew,
We believe in every miracle since Lindbergh flew
the blue,

The wonder of the long draw when the bowstring
is a thread—

The beauty of a courage that can raise the wings
of lead.

THE LINE OF BATTLE

TWO-THIRDS of a fusil
From a hard luck van,
Half a China cupid
Coached by Genghis Khan.

Mistress Molly Pitcher
With the gun-swab, Oh,
One line of a lyric
Led by Edgar Poe.

MOLLY PITCHER

O H, daughters of battalions,
Vivandieres of renown—
Make way for Molly Pitcher
The Maid of Monmouth Town.

A bawling battery sergeant:
"Who loads for Number Three?
"Are all our spongers dying
"Of common infantry?"

'Tis then I see a damsel
Her water pail set down
And lift the greasy gun swab
In front of Monmouth Town.

Athwart the years I hear it,
The clangor of that rod,
A goddess swaying forward
Across a fallen god.

Her breastplate was a camis,
Her helmet was a frown;
She wore no Milan tassets
In front of Monmouth Town.

But in an action kirtle
Slipped on the primer's glove
And rammed the eager round shot
For honour and for love.

Within the halls of heroes
On Friday of each week,
The herald strikes a red gong—
A knight stands forth to speak.

For every true vivandiere
Or girlish Argonaut;
For maids who stripped the falchion
And threw away the slot.

A shadow lips a van horn,
A flare unmask a thole,
And to Crusaders' music
A spurred one reads the roll.

From Esther and Thermuthis
Who starred with eye-lids wet,
To Gertrude in the tallow,
And Helen at the net.

And she who got an ardor
To set a bucket down
And won the heart—with palm leaves
In front of Monmouth Town.

THE LOST PROVINCE

O H, land divinely simple,
From whence we made escape,
Back of your lichened borders
The leisure of the grape.

We had no Torquemada,
We had no Genghis Khan;
The dullness of our greatest
Could not explain a fan.

But oh, we were so happy,
We simpletons of old;
We went around in nothing
And never felt the cold.

We lazed for half a morning
Before we rose to sup;
In those days we were gentle
And helped each other up.

TADMOR

A PRINCESS of Palmyra long had ailed
From an unsolved oasal indolence.

Her name was Tadmor—taken from the palms;
Their quietness was sifting into her.

Magicians masked for safety talked with Baal;
That somber princess did but wilt the more.

The king, her father, desert alchemist,
Began to doubt such far off therapy.

Of simmerings by pythons certified
He made a brew that shamed the figwort's vim.

But just before the proper bubbles showed
There came a crisis on a sultry night.

Within her fretted octagon, unroofed,
A palace wing and nigh unto the sands,

The heiress to this empire of the palms
Unawninged lay in moonlight and asleep.

And suddenly there was a fearful cry—
The lovely Tadmor in a trance had screamed.

Nude slave girls tumbled, racing for her couch;
The night guards clashed their spears in panicked
halls.

Red resins roused the startled terraces
And torches swarmed in timid colonnades.

Armed eunuchs straddled trivial passages—
Came running in great Dagon of the Watch.

Lastly the king, a leopard at his heels,
And mounted demons spurring from each
eye.

He found the harem filled with rocking maids
Surrendered to the orgies of the sob.

Upon a dais of Damascus blue
His daughter crouched and bare of any weave.

Her eyes were bigger than her anklet bands,
An ebon crescent under either orb.

Her ashen cheeks out-paled the peonies,
And to her heart the trembling knees were hugged.

A nude from Ind, another from the Nile,
Were chafing insteps and a pallid brow.



"Her name was Tadmor—taken from the palms;
Their quietness was sifting into her."

Caressingly thus spoke Palmyra's king:

"Oh, Tadmor, name the thing that did affright.

"If mute or myrmidon has entered here

"He shall be ripped, sand-viper filled and sewed."

THE PRINCESS

"I slept and dreamed, alas, that I was dead,

"Extended on this silent blameful couch.

"A coterie of lepers, minus chins,

"With hand bells tinkling, marched around my
corse.

"A desert wolf, on hinders, dead himself,

"Stole in and crossed these very hands you see.

"Groups of dead swathers came with linen rolls—

"Prepared to wind the bandage of the tomb.

"I could not move—no tidals of the breath,

"And yet from half-cloaked eyes I saw it all.

"It was so true, that final insolence—

"When Lo, I heard the buzzing of a gnat.

"A lively fly, an angel with green eyes,

"A godly fly, an orchestra a-wing.

"He came from whence I may not yet surmise,
"And whirled in pity thrice above my face.

"At last he dived in spirals too minute
"For any but the lost to count a whorl.

"He raced the swathers for my left side breast
"And stung your daughter back to life again.

"He must be some great pagan god disguised,
"Cruising on wing as oft immortals do.

"Now this I pledge, the daughter of the king,
"He shall have altars built of reddened gold."

THE KING

"I too can tell a midnight storyette,
"The short recital of a captured droll.

"When we surprised the Scythian horde last year,
"Among the prisoners was an alien prince.

"A half-way boy who played Mongolian
"Until we tripped his secret—it was Greece.

"Our ransom board moved slowly for that stray
"Worked odd illusions with his gnat-green eyes.

"He slacked the lid when questioners approached
"His tongue was also blind as far as speech.

"But in his slumber open flew the eye,
"—He dribbled of a beast called 'Parthenon.'

"Ourselves we go when sleeping princes talk
"And list the prodigies of northern lairs.

"Beneath a barbarous shelter of stale skins,
"Wide-eyed he dozed, the emeralds on display.

"For his were green, as Tadmor's are the brown;
"And dawn his hair, as Tadmor's braids are dusk.

"But what amazed us more than certain names
"Was that his muttering to music turned.

"There was the everlasting twang of strings,
"The sound of runnels and of smitten leaves.

"We caught and lost a sideway slipping theme
"About the repetitions of the soul.

"Our battle sages said he was a mime
"Born to relate the privacies of gods.

"To lend some pomp, your father raised the youth,
"Assigned him quarters and a palanquin.

"A messenger was sent unto his realm
"With small demand—a perfect Parthenon.

"Our raids were closed—a season's loot in salt,
"When Thessaly sent bargainers of birth.

"Their shrunken camels tottered under gold
"And chests of dazzling oddities.

"Swords limbered to endure the triple coil,
"And helmets one could wiggle inside out.

"A scroll was passed that courteously explained
"The matter of a missing edifice.

"All that they wanted was a hovel boy,
"A boy called Delos, with no pedigree.

"When we in audience produced our pawn,
"Two old Greeks slobbered and betrayed a throne.

"And then he would not go—that sulky cub;
"He said his travels were not quite complete.

"We waived the ransom—took it as a gift;
"Sent our regrets in rubies to the north.

"Our guest remained with us as scientist,
"Planning a park where divers herbs might grow.

"A clustering of old simplicities
"Oft led, he claimed to revelations grand.

"The plan was spacious, taking in all fruits,
"And at a festival we sanctioned it.

"The cost a mere ten thousand laborers,
"Collectors' caravans to borders dim;

"Some elephants to lug maturity
"And twine enough to bale Arabia.

"Ourselves, the owner and the overseer;
"The whole a gift for Tadmor of the Palms.

"Tomorrow when the sun well tilted lies,
And shadows tamper with this octagon,

"Let Tadmor fix her gaze upon the wall—
"That segment where two needled palms unite.

"If she persists in staring at these trees
"A charm from ambush will produce the park."

THE SECOND NIGHT

The moon was up, in robe of Sapphic blue;
The dusk, half risen, verified the hour.

Within the harem Tadmor's favorites
Were in attendance, witnessing the gift.

Two trees of thread in stillness of the stitch,
Were scrutinized from tassel down to sward.

Two trees of thread, but one had surely moved;
A Libyan server ceased to sway his fan.

All felt the chill that comes uncalendared
When ghostly breezes ruffle needlework.

A visionary gale had blown a frond;
It fell upon the tiles at Tadmor's feet.

She stooped to gather that mistreated leaf
When one deep slave girl pointed at the palms.

The trees of thread were dwindling into dust;
A yellow vapor had obscured the wall.

Out of this topaz haze an entrance yawned—
Undoubtedly the doorway to a park.

From the arched portal came a humming sound,
So faint at first it minimized the gnat.

This tenuous lilt, the airy reaches trod
To the full octave of a serenade.

Song

Great is the rose
Infected by the tomb,
Yet burgeoning
Indifferent to death.

Wherein the dawn
Did stumble to fulfill
The rose has told
In one simplicity.

That never life
Relinquishes a bloom
But to bestow
An ancient confidence.

Great is the rose
That challenges the crypt,
And quotes milleniums
Against the grave.

When droopers wan hear hopeful threnodies
A thrill unveils the troops of Macedon.

The phalanx forms in cheering artery,
And hoplites red outflank the median line.

Along the front run fanioned ralliers,
Electric pricklings storm a coronal.

The Princess Tadmor, following the song
Drew to the door depicted in the mist.

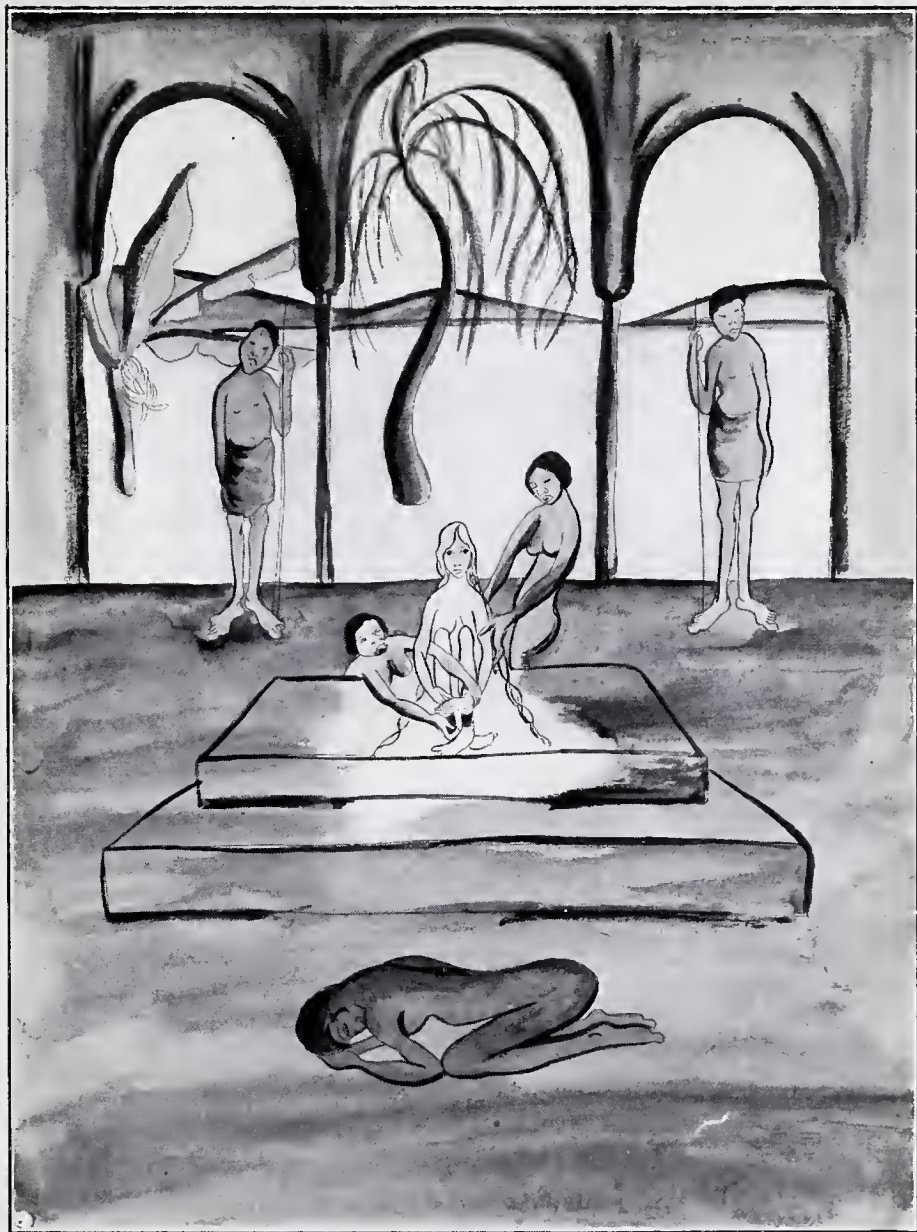
Before her went the praiser of the rose,
An unseen singer chanting ecstasies.

Where sand had once companioned with the dirge
New sovereigns reigned, the tendril and the bole.

A heavenly outskirt purposely had sagged,
Some fringe of paradise that touched the earth.

A jasmined gard by crystal fountains cooled—
The purple valley of a sure delight.

'Twas filled with trees and vines and waterfalls,
With reed ventriloquists and talking plants.



"Upon a dais of Damascus blue
His daughter crouched and bare of any weave. . . ."

The orchid there, the Rose of Jericho.
The gelder in the chiton of the flake.

A hundred extradited humming birds
In moonlight flashed to halt and orient.

The song had ended but that dewy wild
Evinced an inclination to converse.

A moth in crimson whispered learnedly
Of ferns that could vocabularies use.

Of buds that needed not interpreters
To dress their nascent language in a noise.

A jade cascade broke into lisping spray,
And spilled cajoling sentences from foam.

It named a hillside whence it had been lured
By a sad mime who seemed beset with palms.

It gave the items of a 'take-me-down'—
Described a journey on a rollered float.

With laughter told of staring flocks and herds
That turned to see a cataract go by.

"Oh gentle, sweet and lettered waterfall,
"Saw you a singer pass along this way?

"You would have noticed him in common garb,
"Or in the burnished surplice of the gnat.

"He may have worn the talon and the tawn,
"He may have worn less raiment than the wind."

As nymphs distraught have leaned and waked a
source,
So Tadmor woke a speaker in a vine.

"Within the dark rotunda of the grape,
"Eternity sits fingering a void.

"A realm suspended in an interim—
"The seedling's empire waiting to repeat.

"The waterfall retains its destiny—
"The dripping sound allied to earthly peace.

"Adown the years, the leaves with rustlings soft,
"Have soothed the heart where blunter music
failed.

Song

There is no rose
In all Illyria,
No Sidon rose,
No rose of Syria;

Like to the rose
That in Palmyra charms
A desert rose
Beneath the desert palms.

In Shusan reigns
The lily with the crown;
And by the Nile
A lotus of renown.

But only one
More sweet than cascadel—
The desert rose
Beside a desert well.

There is no rose
In Macedonia—

The Princess Tadmor running down an aisle,
Came to an arbor made of unstripped rush.

Upon a bench and hunched to play the lute,
There sat an angel singer smiting strings.

A slim fair youth, as angels often are,
With eyes the green of isolated seas.

Astonishment struck both to kneeler's pose;
Between them fell the jangling Grecian lute.

TADMOR

"It is that pagan god, with emerald eyes,
"Who in the costume of the gnat prevailed.

"Whose aureate pinions strove above my face,
"And overthrew interners in a dream.

"Would that I knew a ritual to please—
"When Egypt strays or Greece patrols the night."

THE PRINCE

"I am not he who wore those golden wings,
"Or flew to rescue you from sudden harm.

"I did not know a goddess was so near,
"Else would a song have turned into a prayer.

"You see a prisoner taken by a king,
"Who after ransom tarried here as guest.

"I now renounce all other deities
"Even if you should care to disappear."

When two unconscious candidates for fanes
Go slighting idols of antiquity;

The Phidian Zeus from exaltation slips,
And Milo's model inventory takes.

There on their knees—Oh, Juno and Oh, Jove;
Oh, Baal, Oh, Dian, and the Golden Calf.

They dared to kiss, expecting instant death
But since they lived continued worshipping.

The night was theirs, the moon, the park—and love,
Recurrences forecasted by the rose.

* * * * *

They sacked Palmyra's cairns the other day—
The serious pick and anxious-minded sieve.

Among the fragments of a broken vase
Were clayen tablets in cuneiform.

Grave scholars matched the pieces on a board,
And read this ancient romance of the palms.

It seems that Delos till the day he died
Believed that Tadmor was a deity.

The wedges showed how Tadmor also erred—
She always thought her idol was a god.

At dawn, according to the chronicle,
The king into the gard enchanted came.

He brushed aside defending foliage,
And gazing, saw mythology asleep.

Two images, a daughter and a prince,
His children, dreaming leaners on a bench.

Their heads were close as deities intent,
Their arms around each other as they slept.

The tablets told of a great wedding feast,
Of altars raised and happy nights and days.

And on the corners of the clay were wings—
In reddened gold—*the signet of the gnat!*

Note. (The gnat in Palmyra closely resembles a golden honey bee, so I have been informed.) N. C.

THE END OF JULIET

WHEN we were in the romper clad our eyes
were always wet,
We had a nurse who played for us the end of Juliet.
We did not know who Shakespeare was, we did not
greatly care—
Our only thought was Julie and we wept upon the
stair.
The stage the limits of a rug, the wings retired
shawls,
And yet Verona stood within those prosy nursery
walls.
And though the citadels below thought grief was
merely fun
We went on with the drama and that starry cast
of one.
The years had shaken trees but twice, the leaves
were in the brown
When we were told that nurse had sailed away to
Stratford Town.
To witness some fair mimicry by Avon's gentle
light.
And yet she gave no farewell buss and quite forgot
to write.
The territories of the print are always in the hand;
We read that fire in Stratford Town had burned the
Shakespeare stand.
And then there came a bulletin that bursaries had
met
To build a grander playhouse for the lovely Juliet.
America was eager, and old provinces as well

To rig a grid with fifty drops, endow a curtain
bell.
Oh, what a just huzzahing when a knight unfurls
the roll,
And takes one tragic idyll from the harem of the
mole.
The laurel girds in Ilium, the rush goes forth from
Ur,
Golconda primes the guelder rose, Jerusalem the
myrrh.
If we should ever venture to the scenes in Stratford
Town,
We'd take no labeled folderol nor change to velvet
gown;
But in familiar kirtle and remembered basinet
Go forth to find our nurse who played the end of
Juliet.
To pause before the posters of the gorgeous cochi-
neal
In hopes to see her name between the head bow and
the heel.
To dare the laureled entrances, the rushes drawn
from Ur,
The dust of many roses and the vases filled with
myrrh.
And if we could not find that nurse for myrtle
and for bays—
To lay a nursery tussie there beside the great
bouquets.*

* The poet's contribution to Shakespeare Week held by the American Shakespeare Foundation.

THE CROXON AUCTION

WHEN the prudent Lady Croxon closed her
mansion

It was I that brought the lady's pewter ware;
At the auction, for two cushions I was bidding,
'And I also got an ancient boudoir chair.

Now they tell me that the teapot's truly silver,
That the chair came down from Cardinal Riche-
lieu;

Oh, the connoisseurs are calling every morning:
"Would a damsel like to trade for something
new?"

Once the pewter takes to turning into silver,
'Or a tussock talks of cardinals in red,
It is not the time for any maid to falter,
But to hold the breath and watch a wonder
spread.

So they always find me gasping near my teapot,
Or with duster kneeling down by Richelieu,
And the connoisseurs themselves are agitated—
Never knowing what good cardinals may do.

MARCH OF THE SKELETONS

SMITHSONIAN

DRAW bone, jiggle the skull,
Clapper the joints with art,
Boy, girl, woman or man—
Who can tell us apart?

Boy, girl, woman or man,
What are comparisons?
Lock step, heppety hep—
March of the skeletons.

Draw bone, jiggle the skull,
Flesh is only a shawl;
Here you see the gallery
Wearing nothing at all.

Here you see the gallery,
Look in our eyes again;
Oncely we wore suet too—
Artery and vein.

Draw bone, jiggle the skull,
Clapper the joints with art;
Boy, girl, woman or man—
Who can tell us apart?

Boy, girl, woman or man,
Pick out the Janes and Johns;
Lock step—heppety hep—
March of the skeletons.

THE PRINCE

THE ants, the millers and caterpillars
Are making petitions each day;
They are after the firkins and satin-lined jerkins—
A prince cannot turn them away.

The millers assert that a prince must be fair
And help with the loading of carts;
That although a levy may sometimes be heavy—
To abdicate only breaks hearts.

In a counsellor's gown I've repeatedly said
That the limits were reached long since;
Yet still they come pleading and one must show
breeding
When subjects insist on a prince.

THE GREAT EXPLOSION

WE were all at the dining room table
And just about ready to sup,
On the twenty-ninth evening of April—
The night that the moon blew up.

Our neighbors were out in a jiffy,
The engines came into the square;
Policemen warned all to be quiet
For fear of disturbing the air.

The building department sent wreckers
Supposing some pieces might fly;
We huddled on porches till daybreak
And stared at the smoke in the sky.

There was Mary and Molly and Mazie,
And mother was dishing the greens
When Luna went off like a bombshell
And burst into smithereens.

Now we have grandma diplomas
And over the porcelain cup
We tell the greatest of stories—
The night that the moon blew up.

NATURE'S MIRACLE

CAME a timid sand dune
To a pagan creek;
Raised its pin-point boulders—
Basining the peak.

Thereupon a beach gust,
In an orbit gowned,
Blew that dune in granules
All the world around.

Sand fell on seraglios
In Algeria;
Baskets full were wafted
Far as Florida.

Tons of falling feldspar
Splashed the Hebrides;
Infant isles emerging
Dazed the Caribbees.

Surf lines lost all order
In the Orient;
From the mid-Pacific
Rose a continent.

THE MASTER OF THE WIND

BENEATH a tree
In ancient Turkistan
There sits a dwarf
Who calmly waves a fan.

All balmy blows
Or storms that devastate
Proceed from thence—
So travellers relate.

That dwarf he sits
In ducats to the knees
And charges for
Each movement of a breeze.

None lay great stress
Upon that midget man;
They say a djinn
Resides within the fan.

Still there's the tree
With habitations pinned;
One leaf may house
The Master of the Wind.



"Beneath a tree
In ancient Turkistan
There sits a dwarf
Who calmly waves a fan. . . ."

THE HONOR OF THE CRIB

THE boosters come deriding
The porringer and bib;
They taunt us with beginnings—
The Honor of the Crib.

They say that we came hither
As beads in cartons green.
The pods that we have opened
Held nothing but a bean.

They say there is no ocean
In any lovely shell;
That some one lied in Zurich
And made up William Tell.

But we are early cynics,
We show it in our eyes.
We know we came from Heaven—
We know where Heaven lies.

The surges in our urges
Made drops of water round;
We learned to draw the corner
Before there was a sound.

We calmly sip the finger—
Go on with William Tell,
Defend that unseen tumbler,
The ocean in a shell.

IN FORECASTLES ADRIFT

IN the blythesome times in West Street—
In the days of the Yo-Heave-O,
There was many a poet went to sea
Who never thought he'd go.

For they crimped them fresh and easy
By the light of the tavern door,
And they sailed at flood for Ispahan
Or the poet's Singapore.

And thus were the verses written
That carry the roller's lift,
The fling of a briney balladry
In forecastles adrift.

They scrawled upon the bunk boards
With pencil, chalk and tar
And by Parnassian metres posed
The Hitch of Zanzibar.

The odes of Jack Gorilla
And Stevie Portugee;
The lines of Chapel Billy's best
And the darkey Jubilee.

Old cargo boats have got them—
The Duke and the Mary Ann
Still show the lovely lyrics writ
By the poet Callahan.

And on the flats of Aden
And by Hoboken's shore
Are hulks that trembling still unveil
McGlory's signature.

It is a fame remembered
That ocean gave a lift
When poets rolled the sleeve to write
In forecastles adrift.

BRAD OF BERKLEY COMMON

HE sat, a legless gentle
Within a hand drawn wain;
He was Brad of Berkley Common
Carving on a weather-vane.

He was Brad of Berkley Common
And his steed from Araby
Was his brother, Pacing Peter,
Foolish from his infancy.

Around old Berkley Common,
In the summer time each year,
The witless drew the legless
Who carved the chanticleer.

There was no lack of orders
For cocks to watch the skies,
The mask in harness drawing
The wagon of the wise.

And while one whittled magic
Upon a roadside green,
The other stared in wonder
At countries never seen.

Eventually the region
 Could boast unnumbered spies
That spun upon a spindle
 And bluffed the timid skies.

Each shower filed full notice
 Before it dared to rain;
For barns in Berkley Common
 Had over-flows of grain.

The winds were early chidden,
 One gnome could broom the snow;
A clime feared wooden warders
 Would flap the wing and crow.

When wizards take the highway
 They put on extra airs,
A glamour and an oddness
 Transmuted to their wares.

They ride in little tumbrels
 And stricken panoply,
But well they know enchantment
 Confers great dignity.

WAITING FOR GOLIATH

I AM that stone a savage instep hates,
The pebble drawn to snap a Scythian's wheel;
I am the nog, the last ounce in the trim
That bids the ballast calm a shaken keel,

Invaders halt when I roll down the hill
Upon a mission for a cause forsook;
The hermit's hour, the time for iron quills—
Another stone has fallen in the brook.

In the Valley of Elah there ran
'Twixt the camps of Manassah and Dan
A brook banked with thistles
And paved with white missiles
For slingers assigned to the van.

In a kink of the brook was a swirl,
That could jealous the round of a pearl;
A watery seer
Bent on gauging the sphere
To calibres fit for a hurl.

There were ovals, and agates full blown,
And one was allied to a throne,
For down an old path
Preparing for Gath
Came David in search of a stone.

I am that stone a savage instep hates,
The image armed by æons in a brook;
And yet no heart in all of heraldry
Shows more despatch when causes are forsook.



"For down an old path
Preparing for Gath
Came David in search of a stone."

THE JAVA MAN

UPON the Isle of Java
And nigh to Cavern Row,
A cave man lost his conic head
One million years ago.

And now the seers are saying
This prehistoric find
Shows how a cave girl's idea made
A shape to fit a mind.

But we who cheer that cave girl
From Gobi to the Nile,
Condemn not on a natal slant
Once worn in Java Isle;

For if they all were happy
In cycles long ago,
What matter if an idea made
The head in Cavern Row.

SHERIDAN'S HORSE

WE went calling on Cræsus,
Talked till our ponies neighed;
Trying to tell a rich man
Kinks of the charger's trade.

We had thought that a head jess
Lessens a stallion's bile—
Sheridan's horse in a warehouse
Over on Governor's Isle.

We had drafted partitions
Fit for a pawner's stall;
Cræsus stared from a window,
Answered us not at all.

Oh, the looks of our ponies
When we came forth again,
Minus Saladin's bridle,
Saddle of Tamerlane.

We have love for our stallions—
Winchester, Lexington;
Praise for an old embalmer
Saving the hide of one;

As for the tongueless ducats
Cræsus has rendered mute,
We can tambour for pennies—
Pæan a great repute.

Sheridan's horse in a temple,
Bitted with turquoise chain;
Girthed and bridled and saddled,
Ready to run again.

Generals standing as hostlers,
Proud of a warehouse nag;
There in star gazer's raiment,
Croesus, himself, with a flag.



MISS BROOKS MAKES REQUEST

(She was six at the time)

SAID Miss Brooks unto Jehovah:
"My head feels very light;
"Do you mind if I omit them—
"My prayers, this Sunday night?"

"Oh, Lord God, I'm so weary,
"As weary as can be;
"Would it inconvenience Heaven
"Or disturb your dignity?"

The Lord God (so she told it
Unto succeeding cooks),
Was equal in politeness:
"Don't mention it, Miss Brooks."

THE MOON OF BROOKLYN

WHEN the moon comes over Brooklyn
On time with the borough clock,
'Tis the same that saw Palmyra
And the walls of Antioch.

'Tis the moon, our first relation,
That kindled the Lesbian bard,
And shone on the old Ægean
As it shines on the Navy Yard.

The moon beloved by Homer,
That Tycho Brahe drew;
That lights the wreaths for soldiers
In Bedford Avenue.

THE PARADE OF THE POPPIES

THERE were the palm and myrtle
Flanking the wreaths of bay;
Then came poppies in cohorts,
Orchids from Paraguay.

All of the files of iris,
Ghosts of old blooms that blushed,
But with the poppies passing
Both of the curbs were hushed.

Yearly we hear a murmur—
Only one flower salves
Rents in our combat legions,
Gaps in the last Zouaves.

Not from a frayed tradition
Entered the poppies red,
But from a sudden vista—
Halls of the newly dead.

Why not one day for soldiers—
Concords and Regnivilles,
All of the buds wore olive
Climbing the Gallic hills.

There are the palm and myrtle,
Also the wreaths of bay,
Then come the lovely poppies—
First in the heart's array.

HANNAH OF HAVERHILL

HANNAH of Haverhill back in town—
Run for a noggin of rum;
Get her a claddy or else she'll swoon,
'Spite of the blockhouse drum.

Hannah of Haverhill back in town—
See what she's got to show,
Caps of eleven tawny ones,
Feathered with hawk and crow.

Give her an escort of elders grand
Unto her own abode;
Off at the gallop a courier
Taking the Boston Road.

Caps of eleven Iroquois.
Think you the score was steep?
Nail them up on the meeting door,
Sachems who fell asleep.

Papaws down by the Merrimac,
Willing enough to talk,
How she missioned them one by one
Muting a tomahawk.

Thimble berries, they mimic her—
Casting their caps away;
Catbirds issue a saucy note,
Taunting the topknot jay.

Sumacs gather in clusters there
Red with their laughter still;
Who is the great evangelist?
Hannah of Haverhill.

THE POE COTTAGE

THERE they dwelt in the wrennet's cot
Just as it was to be;
Paced the halls of a miniature—
Poe and Annabel Lee.

He was garbed in a courtly suit,
She in Colonial low;
Heads together they walked the halls—
Annabel Lee and Poe.

These indeed were particular hours;
No one tells of their glee,
How they laughed in the wrennet's cot—
Poe and Annabel Lee.

What if all of the snow that fell
Never was really snow;
What if all of their griefs were thus—
Annabel Lee and Poe.

What if all of the shadows there
Merely an imagery;
Nothing to do with the wrennet's cot—
Poe and Annabel Lee.

ALI BABA'S CAVERN

SCIENTISTS are poets—
Listen how they rave:
"Ali Baba's cavern
"In a cherry's nave."

Back of secret panels
Lie the peach-pit halls;
Pecks of Burmah rubies
Sticking to the walls.

Ali Baba's cavern
Underneath a lens—
How the Forty Thieves must feel
Losing all their dens.

THE WATER GUARD

IN the dusk of a happy evening
Somebody called for a bard;
Then, to a twanging music
Song of the Water Guard.

SONG

They were stingy and dingy,
They would never give in;
Stood by the camels with sabres—
Scoffed at the leader's kin.

Scrape the sweat from your step-ins,
Prick your blisters and sip;
We are marching on Tunis—
Lords of the swollen lip.

If you want to arrive there
Where the drinking is cool,
Stand aside from the amblers
Lugging the final pool.

We who never had conquered,
Half of us evil-starred,
We came through with the first files
Thanks to the Water Guard.

DANTE ON THE FERRY

(*To PASQUALE MACCHIARULO—Poet*)

OH, its Dante Alighieri is a poet,
And he's working for the Lackawanna Line,
Just a bootblack writing lyrics on the ferry
In between the times he gives unto a shine.

Oh, it's Dante Alighieri feels emotion
When the siren blares an octave in one note,
And he scribbles down a stormy hearted stanza—
How the Bay of Naples rolls a fisher's boat.

In the dark he hears a phantom bow watch hailing,
Marks the Half Moon heading for the Tappan
Zee;
Glimpses luggers slipping south without a side-
light—
For beyond the Narrows lieth Italy.

There's the fog bell calling slips for old Man-
hattan,
There's the jingle from the wheelhouse overhead,
And it's Dante Alighieri sees the lustre
Of the pierhead lanterns done in green and red.

When the Borden stallions cross the morning run-
ways
And the guard gates toss aloft their dripping
hands,

He is visioning the beauty of the long line
And he's hearing clinking sounds for sarabands.

With his breath he makes a mirror out of leather;
With a rag he burnishes the Jersey heel;
But it's evident he's caught the splendid notion
That the poets and the bootblacks always kneel.

THE ESCORT

WE have a heavy escort
Seeing us through the wood,
Great Heart and Don Quixote
Richard and Robin Hood.

Others of equal valor,
Versed in the villain's law;
Thus do the dragons quiver—
Trembles the lion's paw.

Sometimes the wood is darker
Even than Egypt's spell;
That is the hour for Jason
Gareth and William Tell.

Anyone seeking an escort,
Anyone needing a knight,
We but hint of our heroes
Having observed their might.

EXODUS OF THE LEAVES

'T WAS the time that marked the exodus of
summer,
But the leaves on uniforms could not agree;
Some were wanting brass cuirasses like the Swiss
Guards,
Others voted for a lighter panoply.

There were those enamored of an autumn maxim,
And the trees were asked opinion in the brief;
Who should know so well the chevron for the
frondage,
Or the blouse to fit the valor of a leaf?

From September to the middle of October,
Great confusion in the Quartermaster stores;
There were murmurings about Crusader costumes,
Also what the Spaniard wore against the Moors.

It all ended on a somber Sunday morning,
When a cheer was heard within a timber hall,
And old sergeants started issuing equipment
Most becoming for the veterans of Fall.

Then the maple leaves went trooping down the
pathways
In the scarlet of the Waterloo huzzars;
And the oaks put on the russet of the sapper
With the castle of the engineers of Mars.

Not a hemlock lacked the tunic dipped in henna;
In gray shakos went the buckthorn down the
fens;
And the locust for the sake of last endeavor,
Donned the turban of the lordly Saracens.

All the birches marched in kilties of the Black
Watch
With the rear guard moving out in double time;
It was all according to a sudden order
Over which the leaves hold yearly pantomime.



